

discouraged! But there was Sunday. Easter Sunday! Resurrection, Victory! "What language shall I borrow To thank Thee, dearest Friend, For this Thy dying sorrow, Thy pity without end? O make me Thine forever! And should I fainting be, Lord, let me never, never Outlive my love for Thee." From the hymn "O Sacred Head." That Good Friday and Good Sunday together are what give us hope for this life and what also bring life and hope to our world. As we thought about yesterday, we are sent into this world to let our light, which is Jesus' light in us, shine for all to see – and it's because of Friday AND Sunday, forgiveness and life! Give thanks today for those gifts we can too easily take for granted and know our Lord's love is real.

Saturday – Heaven Now!

Heaven now? So wrote the Apostle Peter, that we are "strangers in this world" (1 Peter 1:1). We, baptized believers, experience change because of our relationship with Jesus and by the Holy Spirit guiding our life. The Apostle Paul wrote that we are "fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household" (Ephesians 2:19). We know that the Bible tells us there is a new world coming, a New Heaven and a New Earth, and that we will enjoy it, if we keep faith in our Lord Jesus. We are New Creation – now (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15). Luther put it this way, "He has redeemed me... that I may be his own and live under him (as a citizen) in his realm, and serve him (now, in this lifetime) in endless righteousness, innocence and blessedness, since he is risen from the dead, lives and reigns (now and) into eternity." (Explanation to the Second Article of the Apostle's Creed in the Small Catechism) Friends in Christ, we show Jesus with our words and our life and behavior. Let us do it humbly, trusting in the Father and Jesus' triumph over sin, death and Satan. Let us live the blessed life confidently and boldly. We have heaven now! Yes, now, and that's why we need not worry, fret or lose hope. We have it now, and there's more yet to come after this!

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What Now?

1. Look for one way this week that you can share with at least one person that simple yet powerful message that Jesus loves them.
2. Consider memorizing (or re-memorizing) Luther's explanation to the 2nd Article of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true."

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Monday — Christmas in July

We love Jesus! Isn't that a given? Yes, it really is! A special gift from God who loves me. I was told this good news by my parents from the time I was born. I was given the gift of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism at thirteen days. I learned to know Jesus, "our dear Savior," from my Mom and Dad. Read Matthew 1:18-25. I learned that the Son of God created for himself a body like ours. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. And he was born just like me. His mother Mary and step-father Joseph were told by the Angel Gabriel to call him Jesus. It means "Our God saves," or simply Savior, even Defender or Champion, or Hero. He came from perfect and blissful heaven into our miserable world to bring hope to us sinners. In doing this, he blessed motherhood and childbirth, God's creation. He blessed marriage and the family with his presence in it. He came that "Silent night, holy night," when "All was calm, All was bright, Round yon virgin mother and child." He came for you and me. "Son of God, love's pure light, Radiant beams from Thy Holy Face With the dawn of redeeming grace..." Think of it, like Christmas in July! Jesus is in your life. Every day! Live confidently, with hope, because Jesus loves you!

Tuesday — The Gift of Jesus

Life with Jesus is a gift. We say, along with Luther's explanation in the Catechism: "He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature... with his holy precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death, that I might be his own!" Read Luke 2:41-52. Look at the worth, the great value, that Jesus has given us, his own! Look at the blessing and the importance he gives the family! As we know, brothers and sisters followed in the home of Joseph and Mary. He learned to live in a human family. The parents taught their children God's truth. They taught their family how to live lives faithful to our heavenly Father. As a growing boy Jesus himself learned, as a real human boy, from his earthly parents and teachers. Family is God's wonderful design! Here we learn to live with other people, not just to ourselves. Here we learn to make a living, not just depend on others. Here we learn to love and care for others, not just ourselves. In the Christian family children learn what kind of life God wants us to live. We learn from our parents' discipline to avoid sinful ways we see all around us. We learn through all our life to live like Jesus. For we are "Children of the heavenly Father... God his own doth tend and nourish... From all evil things he spares them, In his mighty arms he bears them. His the loving purpose solely To preserve them pure and holy." We learn to trust and not to worry. God our Father provides, and we give back praise and thanksgiving, and willing and glad obedience.

Wednesday — Jesus in Our Vocations

Read Colossians 3:15-17. Jesus blesses our life's work. He learned a trade from Joseph and worked alongside as a carpenter. Jesus learned his lessons in school as children do today. He is with us as we take up work that our heavenly Father intends for us to do in his world. We each have our place in the world at work. Jesus taught that we are servants to God and to others. Sinners live for themselves. Redeemed and forgiven, we are free to take our place of responsibility and serve the good of all. In return, we also get a wage. Go to work with Jesus on your mind. "With the Lord begin your task, Jesus will direct it. For his aid and counsel ask, Jesus will perfect it... Let each day begin with prayer, Praise and adoration. On the Lord cast every care, He is your salvation... With your Savior at your side, Foes need not alarm you. In his promises confide And no ill can harm you. All your trust and hope repose In the mighty Master Who in wisdom truly knows How to stem disaster... Good will follow everywhere While you here must wander. You at last the joy will share In the mansions yonder."

Thursday — Chosen for a Purpose

You are special in God's eyes. Do you know that? The church has said that we who believe in Jesus are the elect, or the chosen. The Apostle Peter wrote to "God's elect... who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood." 1 Peter 1:1-2. The Apostle Paul wrote to tell Christians they were "called to be saints," that is sinless people. That's us! How can we be sinless? You know. It is because our sins are forgiven in Jesus. But what about the sins we do every day? The Apostle John wrote, "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:8-9. We live in troubled times. Many world views and many gods swirl around us. Who will speak for our Lord Jesus, who came to bring hope and salvation? This is what we were called for. "Let your light shine before all people that they may see your good and wholesome life and praise your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:14-16. It is good to pray at the beginning of each day, "Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy kingdom come (God's rule in the everyday!), Thy will be done on earth (by me, by us) as it is in heaven." For what we do with our lives is dear to our Father.

Friday — Good Friday and Good Sunday

On this day so long ago, a day the church calls Good Friday, Jesus suffered and died on Calvary's cross. It seemed he had failed. Had his life been for nothing? Is there no hope for us, mankind? Is this world beyond saving? It seems so some days, doesn't it? One can get so